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Fall 1980

CALVERT REVIEW



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Calvert Review

Fall 1980

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"Prologue: Returning Home"

(from the novel MY MOTHER'S CHILD)

She closed her eyes, sucking in with a click a deep breath of air, holding it just long enough so she could freeze herself still. She wanted to give her body no cause for sweating, but just the same as she sat she could feel her white dress rising in and around her thighs and when she opened her eyes, letting the air go, the sticky dress filled in the space between her breasts. She heard the cackling of a streetcar's sparks against the wire. And as she squinted against the sun, she saw two raggedy Polish kids dash in front of the streetcar wheels to lay cherry bombs on the steel tracks. Barbara wished she was inside the car following the streetcar wires, waiting for the small explosions.

Today though, she got to ride one of the city's brand new buses that halted like some animal at the curb in front of her, sniffing, whooshing its doors open and smelling of spit-shine wax and cheap upholstery. She closed her eyes one more time.

"Come on lady, you gettin' on or ain't ja?"

As smoothly as she knew how she stretched out her lean right leg, letting the pink trim of her skirt inch a little higher and stick a bit closer. "Tokens, please," said Barbara softly.

The bus was empty save for the driver and a man with a crutch who sat behind the driver, asleep. She walked towards the back knowing the driver wouldn't shift his eyes from the rear view mirror until she sat down.

The bus seemed to moan its way over cobblestone. Its seat vibrated beneath her hips as the driver pumped brakes. She was sure she was going to be sick as much from the bus, the heat, as from having to return to The Hill. If she wanted she could try staring at the black hair that ended in a curl on the flat-faced driver's thick neck. If she tried boring holes into his head then maybe he would stop the damn bus, turn around and look at her. Why not? She had looked at pale, sweet Robert in a bar and grill and he had flown her to New York City. He bought her a wardrobe of fancy clothes and a fifty gallon salt water tank which he filled with imported fist-sized Australian Blues (They

could kill a man in thirty seconds,' he told her) and layered the bottom with pearls. Then one afternoon, Robert showed her a picture-sign of five, slant-eyed, chalky-white women with the printed words:

COME TO THE ORIENT

Sweet Robert, all the while caressing her, said he'd take her there too if she wanted. But Barbara didn't want. So Robert siphoned off the octopi's mineral tank water, gathered up his pearls and poisoned them Blues with Clorox.

All this driverman would have to do was to let himself *feel* her looking at him. What would one moment mean to a driver who moved through the black Hill seven, maybe eight times a day selling tokens six for a dollar? To Barbara, it would mean a lot. A moment would be just enough time to settle her stomach. She glanced to her left at the passing Jewish markets. It was too hot. He was too ugly.

It was then that a young black man boarded the bus and started coming down the aisle towards her in a blue, narrow-lapelled suit, a yellow, black pinstriped buttondown shirt and eighty dollar alligator shoes. He would try to sit beside her, Barbara knew that much. He came unsteadily as the bus moved, widening his grin for her. When he was right up beside the seat, he leaned against the metal bar, crossed his right leg over left, tilted his head and said, "Howdy, Momma." Barbara smiled sweetly, lifted her purse from the floor, laid it flat across the space beside her with a thump and smiled again saying, "Howdy." The young man went to the back of the bus shutting the windows on both sides of him so as to keep his conked hair from waving out of place. Barbara burst out laughing.

No, it had never been sex she was interested in. Jim would tell you different though — if you asked him. And maybe, it would be partly true. That was as good enough explanation for why she'd come back. He'd tell you too his wife came back for the kids' sake. Did she? Barbara didn't know.

The man with the crutch was awake and trying to get off. One leg was man-size; the other was shriveled to the size of a boy's. Barbara took a deep breath. She looked at the color she had painted on her nails. Good color, she thought. Good shine.

Up ahead, Barbara could see the woman, see her waiting at the corner stop. She was lifting her shopping bag heavy with wholesale meat and vegetables as the bus eased to a stop. The woman gripped the side rails and bearing down, tried to lever her body through space. Grunting, sweat popping like corn, she reached the first step. She turned back around, her garter clips showing and flesh rolling over the tops of her support hose, and lifted her bag to the first step as well. Turning round, bearing down, a grunt, she made the second step, turning round, she lifted the bag, turning round, she dug down deep beneath her breasts and tinkled a token into the see-through box. Barbara could see the woman's eyes searching for a seat and resting on the place beside her.

She maneuvered past the fleshy woman, shuddering once. She walked down the aisle shaking her bottom at the conked hair man in the back seat. She whispered a "Fuck you" to the driver as she descended the steps.

The bus pulled away. She was home all right. She sighed softly and then looked at the half mile of steep hill left to go.

II

Up high like this the air wasn't laced with so much steel-mill soot, but all the same the trip had dulled the whiteness of her city dress and colored the red artificial flower in her hair a speckled grey. It didn't matter though. Her father would love her no matter which way she came.

Barbara hadn't been on The Hill since she was about five and what she remembered most was slipping in a puddle, going home, and her Momma slapping her for pee-peeing. It wasn't until years later that Barbara decided that she must have fallen in some wino's urine. Momma was dead now and Barbara taking a slow, heavy step, couldn't help thinking it was almost her father's time too.

The Hill's tenement houses slanted up against one another like lean pack rats. Black folks, all sizes and makes, were hanging out of them. Watching her watching them was what they were up to. The trick was not to shift your eyes, just to keep stepping.

She couldn't remember exactly when dark faces began to bother her. Perhaps it occurred riding into downtown surrounded by the lovely wafting scents of white ladies' perfumes. Or yet when she was brown and 'oh, so beautiful' and other children dark and 'oh, so sweet.'

She passed a row of two-story houses which seemed to have been gutted out by fire. Doorless, windowless, they held litter, glass bottles, and spring mattresses. Night hotel, she thought, and as she saw two black boys dance along the roof ledge, jungle gym. Other places there were just empty lots. She stopped and wiped her forehead with the back of her hand. Moving, she noticed a pennycandy storefront, a neon bail bond sign in a hockshop window filled with battered radios, and a pretty pickaninny child playing hopscotch who wore pigtails growing out from the top of her head and reminded her of her younger daughter Jackie. As soon as she bought a new straightening comb she was going to lay her daughter's pigtails flat.

"What you doing here lady?" asked the hopscotch child.

The child followed behind her.

"What you doing here?" she asked again, letting her voice squeak even higher.

"Walking."

"You got a nickel?"

"And what if I do?"

"Can I have it?"

"Borrow it?"

"No. Have it." The little girl's eyes never wavered.

"What's your name?"

"Luella," she said, and then flipped her palms outwards like a knife. Barbara smiled. The girl uncurled her lips and grinned.

"Here."

The girl turned and ran, letting her over-sized, hand-me-down dress flap at the back of her knees.

A man zigzagging a hose over his car provided a stream which followed the girl down the street weaving mud patterns. Out of the corner of her eyes, Barbara could see the man scratching his bulging parts and looking at her.

A few feet ahead of Barbara was a crowd of men circled around something. She thought to cross over to the other side of the street. But the sight of men on a cracked, steamy pavement whooping it up fascinated her enough to make her keep still.

A tambourine was jingling, rattling out a fancy jazz rhythm in three-quarter time. The teenage boys were flinging their shirts into the air — twirling them like hi-fliers. She kept hearing some sort of low, guttural moan punctuated by high shrieks. Voices from the crowd were yelling, humming tunes like bees. It seemed like a revival scene with the holy ghost descending on everyone. She knew she couldn't get through the crowd and she was too small to see over the shoulders of the men.

So Barbara walked up a nearby house's steps, right on up to the brick-red porch landing and stood beside a high yellow girl who was nursing a baby. Now, in the middle of the men, she saw a bony, blue-black old man with protruding cloudy eyes. He wore a thick, navy-blue overcoat even though it was so hot. Mucus flowed from his nose. His pants were ripped from the knees down. His shirt green. His nappy hair and beard spiralled around pieces of bedding lint. He hopped up and down from foot to foot while banging a tambourine on his ass.

"A spell-man," said the yellow girl beside Barbara. "He sells spells." Barbara blinked.

"Every Friday, he sells the same spell for the men."

"Does it work?"

"No, but it still sells."

She was beginning to hear the spell-man better now. It was all a matter of getting used to the stresses:

two for a quarter, I say two/ee, two/ee, for a quarter, two/ee, to hit de man, guaran/teed to hit de man where it hurts, where his soul lives, make his thang whither like prunes, two/ee, two/ee for a quarter, 'til his white Sal/lee caint take it no mo', no mo', screamin' de Devil has dealt with my man, two for a quarter, she comes to you, Sal/lee comes cause de man caint de/liver no mo', no sir/ee de white man pumps mushy prunes, dese spells for a quarter de/servin'

of de white man who stole our brown An/nees on de plantation, dese spells, dese spells, for de white man, your boss may he be, your ene/mee, turn the fate of the world around with dese spells, two for a quarter, it can show how to beat, de/feat de man, de white man . . . buy spells . . . buy spells . . .

Barbara glanced disgustedly at the high yellow girl and her black boychild sucking at her teat. She walked down the steps and away. She moved concentrating on the pains in the backs of her legs and on the names of the bars she passed. There was the *Circus Inn*, *Peppermint Patty*, *Something Slick*, *Blacky White's Grill*, and *The Bar*.

It was *The Bar* she was interested in. Her father would be in there.

III

The room was so cool. A ceiling fan was whizzing and slicing. Barbara could almost feel the sweat drying up from her body. He was there. She could see him just barely. She edged slowly through the jigsaw of red and white checkered bar tables and chairs.

"Hello, Pop."

Joseph Wright was sitting in the far booth, drinking a beer. He laid the glass down and wiped his lips. "Sit down. Heh, Mason, bring my daughter a beer."

Mason was lanky and wore a white apron and a white chef's hat.

"How've you been, Pop?"

"Wait a minute, just shut up. A man hasn't seen his daughter in how long? And he can't even get, what, a minute of silence to look her over? Heh? Let me look you over." Joseph Wright smiled.

"And here's a beer for the lady. Joe's little gal. You grewed up really nice and pretty. Joe, what do you say, you have a pretty daughter or don't you?"

Barbara watched her father scratch his chest and shrug.

"Joe, always kidding. You're lovely kid, really lovely. And don't let your father tell you any different. The beer's on me."

She leaned back against the hard booth wood as her father scanned her face, cataloguing her finer points. Small, rounded lips, cheekbones that seemed to rise out of nowhere. But her eyes, so black were his favorite. Every man she knew marvelled at how they slanted like a Chinaman's.

Mason the bartender cleared this throat. "Heh, Joe, anything else you need?"

Joe shifted restlessly in his chair. "Naw, go on. Get outta here."

"Right, Joe. Sure thing." Mason started shuffling, bobbing side to side, mooning over Barbara.

Joe swung his arm and Mason ducked in time to avoid getting hit.

"O-ke-doke, Joe." Mason winked at Barbara and walked over to the bar and began rubbing down the counter with his hand like it was some cat's fur.

"You shouldn't treat him like that, Pop."

"Mason? He's looney as a sailor. Heh, Mason. You're looney, ain't you?"

Mason kicked his legs out to the side and clicked his heels.

"Am I pretty, Pop?"

Joe shrugged again. "Sure, you'll have a hard time convincing Mason that you're not."

Barbara laughed. Her Pop was such a big man. He was so light he had passed for white many years back when he joined the Navy. His light blue eyes had clinched it. Not many Negroes had that color then. His whiteness made him an officer and got him a big, blue tattoo of a snake with the words 'Don't Tread on Me.' Later the whiteness got Joe a nice safe beat as a policeman. Pop was retired now, but Barbara knew he was still packing a gun.

"When did you get back?"

"Yesterday."

"Seen Jim?"

"I'm with him, Pop."

Throwing his head back, Joe swigged at his beer. "I never expected it. The kids remember you?"

"Tonie does. Jackie was too young."

"You should have listened to me, Barbara. Jim was never right. Not for you."

"I've heard this, Pop."

"It's just that I don't understand you. You come traipsing back here after how long? And for what? A no-good nigger who ain't got a pot to piss in." Joe squeezed his eyes tight for a second. "You didn't have to, you know, go back there. I mean, if you're in any trouble, ah, you could've come to me."

"I'm not in any—."

"Money? Is that it?" He pulled crumbled bills from his pocket. "I mean ain't no sense in you doin' somethin' you don't really want to do."

"I'm doing what I want."

The bills, resting between them, trembled in the slight breeze.

"I suppose you are." With a linen handkerchief, he wiped dirty sweat from the back of his neck.

"How you been feeling?"

"Why ask me that now?"

"It's a simple question."

"How long has it been since you asked?" He scowled. "I didn't mean that. Look, I got a real nice place—."

"No, Pop."

"It's not far from here. You could stay on The Hill with me like you used to. Old times."

"I don't like it here, Pop."

Joseph Wright pulled in his gut. He spoke quietly, "Barbara, I never

see you."

"There's nothing here, Pop. Not in this city."

"Nor in any other for what you're looking for."

"Come with me, Pop."

"Where? Didn't New York teach you nothin'?"

"You'd be with me."

"Nights I listened to your Momma wail about leaving. Instead what was good between us up and left."

"Just say you'll do it."

"When I wouldn't for her?" He laughed a deep, gurgling sound.

"Besides who'll look after Mason?" Then just as sudden, he peered at her and said, "Will Jim be with you?"

She touched his cheek. "I need you."

His hand smashed down against the table. Then he closed his eyes and let the weight of his head fall into his daughter's palm.

With her other hand, she caressed the top of her father's close-shaven head. She whispered, "Who's the best Pop in the whole world?"

Joe shoved her hands away. "I need another beer."

"You are," finished Barbara.

He stood up. "Mason," Joe bellowed, moving away from his daughter. "Move your ass."

Joe swigged at his beer and looked back across at his daughter. "Don't mean a damn thing that smile. Your Momma's smile," muttered Joe.



Dave Hubbard

The Clock

The survivor in me lusts for my tall wooden clock
With the iron hands and the eagle.

It was built by my great great great
Grandfather. It is a rock
My survivor needs.

I speak to him sometimes when he is listening
For prowler sounds, decay sounds.
I tell him

How craven he is and I bore him. Each morning
He looks at my brave clock and, seeing it firm there,
Gives me a deep look, the cheat.

When the next great darkness comes his plan is
To sell that Terry clock.

Then my great great great great pa and I
Will lie
In the darkness, shocked.

Conversation with Stars, 1980

Stars, I have never seen you so large.
You hang there too close, cockeyed, upside down
Bending head first, dippers empty.
It must be more than the season's change,
As if you came to watch at the alarm of war
Your sister—after all the myths—
Finally fall.

Are you really surprised it took so long
For the Black Prophet to come take so many
Who know you best, the spring wheat,
And burn sacrifice—saving the chaff?
Are you, once smug with the wise men's mistake
Grown impatient; do you hurtle down fiery stones
To hurry the slick cavity of Pandemonium
Belch a great birth in Persian chorus,
Take form from haggling prayers over a greased death?

Tell me your sister's instinct will keep
The myths intact, that volcanoes and a luscious
Shake in the sun will keep her old ambassador
Beckoning, craftily, to delight us once more—
That we may die with lifted arms holding
A funny life on another's lips and breasts.



The Eye of the Storm
Kirk McKoy

The Inchman Sketches

An acquaintance of mine died a few weeks ago. His name was Emmett Inchman. I had intended to use him as a character in a novel I am planning to write, but at the time of his death I had only written a few exploratory character sketches. I didn't know Emmett Inchman well enough to use him in my novel, so these sketches, incorporating a four-line one-column obituary as it was printed in the Scantville (Ohio) News story written by Emmett, will have to be the only published records of a man who lived on this earth for forty-five years.

1. The Creative Process

Emmett Inchman and an old army buddy are walking home after spending the evening in a bar where they tipped a waitress in hot pants very generously. Emmett has just invited the army buddy to stop at his house for a cup of coffee, but his buddy is reluctant.

"Come on," says Emmett. "She's very nice sometimes. Really."

"After you've been out drinking?" asks his friend.

"Maybe she'll be asleep," says Emmett. This, he knows, is fantasy. She is waiting.

"Again?" asks his wife, as they come through the front door.

"Can't teach an old dog new tricks," says Emmett Inchman.

"You and your GOD DAMN CLICHES!" says Marie Inchman. "Don't you every have A CREATIVE THOUGHT?"

She speaks like a piston engine, chugging out the first few words and then picking up speed and velocity. The old army buddy is embarrassed. Emmett begins humming an Irish tune.

"How are things in Glocc-a-morr-a?" he sings softly. His wife glares.

"There's nothing like a good cuppa coffee," Emmett suggests. "For me and my ol' army buddy here."

"Even your FRIENDS ARE CLICHES!" Marie screams. "You've never had an original thought IN YOUR LIFE!"

Emmett's mind is drowsy with drink but he is determined. Thoughts flash by without handles and he is about to give up and agree when outright originality crosses his consciousness.

"HOW ARE GLOCCS IN THING-A-MORRA?" he sings loudly.

Hearing this, Marie Inchman announces that the whole business makes her WANT TO PUKE.

And, says the old army buddy on his way out the door, "I'm movin' on down the line."

2. At the Intersection

Driving home from the party, Emmett Inchman hits the brake and says: "All right let's fight we can't go anywhere do anything we're through there's nothing else to say or do!"

"Green light," says his wife.

3. Emmett Inchman's Own Story

After I had known Emmett for a few days he asked me what I did for a living.

"I'm a writer," I said. "I'm planning to start writing a book soon."

"A true book or a made-up one?"

"Fiction."

"I've never read any of that," he said.

"You've never read any fiction?"

"Never."

I gave him a copy of what I was reading at the time, a short story by Hemingway called "Fathers and Sons." He read it quickly and said: "I could write a story as good as that one."

"Why don't you?" I asked.

The next day he handed me a sheet of notebook paper which resembled a battlefield. He had worn several craters in it by erasing and there were front lines of crossed-out words and insertions.

"It's harder than I thought," explained Emmett, and he never mentioned writing again. At that time I would have bet that the story would never get into print, but that shows that even people who are planning to write novels don't know everything. Here is Emmett Inchman's story, printed with the permission of Marie Inchman, who has checked it over carefully for cliches:

THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE

by

Emmett Inchman

Dick Adams and his son Bumblebee were driving from Key West to Spiggott, Arkansas back in the 30s. Bumblebee asked his father a question: "Daddy, am I the only one in the world who believes in

chocolate-covered ants?"

Dick Adams said: "Maybe, son. But you are better off than most people if you have anything at all to believe in. And that is the true meaning of life."

The End

4. Eunuchery

Hot night. They lie abed sleepless and stare sightlessly into the heavy bedroom air.

"I don't think I want to discuss our sex life tonight."

"There wouldn't be much point, since it's nonexistent."

Silence adds to the burdens on their chests, heaving against the humid stickiness of still heat which penetrates muscles, bones, organs, blood. Break the silence, break the heat.

"You're a perverted pig and always have been. Groveling and grabbing and slobbering on our wedding night. Panting like an animal. An animal! An animal with filthy paws. Normal sex was never enough for you. Always asking me to do those disgusting things. How can you face yourself in the mirror when you get up in the mornings?" Emmett spits these last words toward his wife.

"I manage in the mornings," says Marie Inchman, "but these nights are very, very hard."

5. Eros and Thanatos in the Far East

Emmett had been in the Korean War but didn't talk about it much. One night, though, we drank beer for quite a while and the subject came up. This is our Korean War conversation, Emmett speaking:

"I had a one-year tour in Korea. After six months you were eligible for R and R. Most guys went to Japan and that's where I got to go. Three days in Tokyo. You wouldn't believe those three days. I spent five hundred and fifty dollars in three days. Two nights and three days. Went with some other guys from the flight line. We had three hotel rooms, they were suites actually adjoining. For three days those rooms were crammed full of people. Women, mostly. There was always something going on around the clock. It's hard to describe what that weekend was like to someone who wasn't there."

Emmett lapses into silence. He is staring into the polished bar. He is spending five hundred and fifty dollars. He has three adjoining suites filled with women in the Tokyo hotel and he doesn't want to check out again.

"What happened then?" I prod, gently.

He lifts his beer. "I spent six more months in Korea and then they shipped me back."

"See much of the war?"

"No, I was on the flight line. I saw a lot of people who did, though.

The first man I saw dead, I mean someone who was killed, I won't forget that. Jeep turned over on him, about twenty miles off base. We sent a chopper and the damn thing crashed on the way back. Didn't hurt anyone except the guy who was already almost dead and I guess that finished him. We sent out another one and I was there when they took the guy off. No sheet or anything, they just pulled him out and laid him on a stretcher. I'll never forget how that guy looked. I could describe exactly what he looked like. There was no sheet or anything."

"How did he look?"

"Brother, he looked like hell."

6. Silence is at Least Silver, if Not Golden

Emmett Inchman smoked two packs of cigarettes every day for twenty-five years and started to have problems: a hacking cough that sounded like he was breaking up a set of dishes inside his lungs, lack of energy, that sort of thing. He quit smoking cold turkey but it made him grouchy. His dog got in the way and he kicked the dog pretty hard (it limped for ten days); he couldn't sleep; he told his wife he wished she would go away; everyone he knew pleaded with him to start smoking again and eventually he did, but he got sick with emphysema complicated by chronic bronchitis and had to go into the hospital. After the tests he was told that it was terminal and he didn't take the news well.

He accused his wife of hating him and wanting him to die every time she came to see him in the terminal ward. Finally it got to where he would ask her if she wanted him dead and she wouldn't answer. So he quit asking, and there was nothing but silence at the end.

CITY RESIDENT DIES

Emmett Henry Inchman, beloved husband of Marie Helen Inchman, died yesterday at M. Oak Hospital after a #**?)\$%- + - + . The funeral will be held at the Holy no children, and is survived by an uncle, Herbert Elmore Inchman of the city.

Waiting for the Storm

A spruce reaches its lace
branches into dark clouds.
You chop this and others
down one by one
until the ground
rises with blue needles.
You toss kindling wood
into my padded arms
for warmth later.

The wind stretches its neck
back and moans
and whips against
the walls of the canyon.

Which way the tree will fall
cannot be certain,
so you stand back,
ready for direction,
and let the wind bite it through.

Over one ridge of Jemez Mountains,
the sky is black at noon.
Clouds swell with moisture
a billion years old.
Blue Spruce wait for white cover.

I imagine lying back, my naked spine
digging and etching a line in the snow.

You fire my neck with your breath;
you press me into my own image.

We sleep, full of each other and warm.
I dream the snow cuts a path as it melts.

The day ends in a fire
I light with the load
I have carried down
from the mountain.

The snow falls
white and heavy
from a cluster of stars.

You crawl into silence
and then sleep,
one hand still
gripping the steel rod,
ready to wake
and stir the ashes.

New York Taxi

Baby, I haven't considered what it would be like without you,
but I imagine it's like empty back seats. I don't twist words with you,
there's no better authority on the road, you know that.
We both know that cigarette burning in the dish wasn't my brand
last night, and you said no visitors.

Do lies hold your form like an old mattress
left on a corner? Ladies each night slide up the street
in red exhaust. Sometimes, when I don't want to go on
another block, I tilt my cap over my eyes and cross my arms
at the gas pump. I've met your type before.

You're good at fumbling in the kitchen and getting brown
in someone else's backyard. It's all long distance
between us, no matter what the ads imply with a long cord
and a touch dial. I think I'll give you a ring from a booth tonight.
Your father always brought you something sweet, a sucker
from New Jersey, now begs you to call home.

I've got the scars on my hands, that knife I called my sixth finger
because I wouldn't believe it was you who bloodied that hand
then drew water over the sink. I've got a grip on myself, really,
don't worry. They say it happens in suburbia more than we know,
only the men are executives with all the breaks.

This new block we're in — nothing could happen
but don't feel too lucky, getting another job,
now that I'm back on the street. Just last week
the landlord held a girl's throat and let the blood trickle,
because it made him smile. Envious, they say.
She had a big car and he wanted to skip the state.
I can picture it around sunrise,
the sky paling with what is believed the only evidence,
the clouds passing, the hum of engine over state lines.

I'll never give you up in this America.
What makes a man a native I've found starts at old school yards
where first base is always that diamond girls twinkle in their eyes
twisting swings on the playground.



Steven Zerby

Nightmare Food

(for Eldridge Cleaver)

This is what we know:
the longing,
the mean-dog sniff of your hunger.

You see us on buses
trailing our long, blue-veined arms
through the alley of your dreams,
smelling of perfume and impossible money.

We dangle down at you like handcuffs,
smile our pretty teeth,
and hike our skirts.

We are corner talk,
with our good bones and clean knees.

You look for us at morning,
a split skirt,
a glimpse of the promised land.

At night we shine like moons,
walk through the forest like Snow White
with a reek of sirloin.

You, who shop the streets
like maids at market
know this: we have dreams too
and you feed them.

Work for Tinkers

Out for a drink after work and somehow they talked about Annie's roommate. Will had never met her. It was like talking about the weather.

He sipped his beer. "Sounds like the kind of girl who would go to battery operated when desperate."

"She does." Annie's voice quavered slightly.

"Huh? How do you know?"

"I found it by accident in the back of her closet," Blushing. "It's gigantic."

Will laughed, his grey eyes measuring her expression. "How big?"

"I really don't want to talk about it."

"Annie. I know your mind. The size of what?"

"Cad!" The laughter was easy. "We are now going to change the subject. So . . . tell me, how is Jeff?"

The smile fell from him. Quite clearly he could hear Jeff's voice cooing Sweet William, moaning Sweet William. He knew if he closed his eyes he would see Jeff's face at the moment just after climax. The strain of jolting ecstasy ebbing from him, the smudged blue veining pulled down on his eyelids, the moist pink of his lower lip. Will blinked. "Annie?"

"Yes?"

"I'm not in love with him."

"No?" Gentle smile. *Sweetheart, no?*

"No. We've been fairly happy but you don't have to be in love to be happy." Will folded his napkin.

Oh, you prim thing. "Where's my pencil? I've got to write that one down!"

He peered over his glass. "Picking on me?"

"Yeah." She made a fist. "Gonna fight? Huh?" thumbed her nose, "Come on sailor. Out back. In the alley."

He limped a wrist. "Ah, you know we queers don't fight back." And laughter again.

There was a pause for the new song on the juke box. Couples at the bar, some straights but mostly gays. 'A comfortable place for the liberal young' (and *that* from the bottom of the menu). Scattered spider plants and ferns. Pine paneling, stained glass, clean waiters. No waitresses.

Will smiled and waved to someone across the room. Annie narrowed at him. "Should I turn around?"

"Steve."

"Oh." She twisted in the chair. Waved at the handsome blond. Mouthed hello. Steve blew a kiss. Back to Will. "Want me to exit? Bet he'll come over here if I do."

"He thinks I'm cute." Will casually fingered through his dark hair.

"He's right." *There. Took the bait, I hope you're happy.*

"He's not my type."

"You're cracked. With a body and face like that it can't matter."

"Annie! There's more to it than that! God, you make me out cheap."

Giggling. "I was speaking for myself. Give me a few hours with that," she thumbed, "and you will witness a remarkable transformation in my temperament." Sigh. Her rich brown eyes grew languid. "Just thinking about it . . ."

"Let's go to my place." Will gulped the bottom up from his glass.

"Huh?"

"I'll make us dinner. Hamburgers, OK?"

"Sure."

The fountain was on in the Circle. People perched and spread on the benches like starlings on a wire. Licking ice cream cones, holding hands. A radio blared jazz from under a tree. They passed an elderly woman walking an Alsatian. A man lying on the grass was trying to get a baby to say, "Papa, Papa" by repeating it low. The baby just gurgled. Will crooked his arm and winked at Annie, she slid her arm in through his. It was a four block walk to Will's apartment.

As they neared his building an old ragged woman politely asked them for a dime. Annie shook a quarter out from the bottom of her purse and handed it to her with a "Don't spend it on booze." The beggar grinned, bobbed and hobbled away.

"Here we are, good old number 403." Will unlocked the door. He bowed to let Annie enter.

Once inside it was right to the kitchen where Annie poured the gin and tonics while Will began fussing with the burgers. They worked quietly, efficiently, undisturbed by the gentle moaning and ticking of the refrigerator. Then Will broke the peace, "What are you thinking?"

She stirred her ice cubes with a finger tip. "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." Then she laughed, the noise spinning blooms throughout the room. *You ask and I reveal.*

Will flipped the meat patties. He reached for the salt. "Isn't that Mother Goose?"

"Yep."

"There's another line." He grinned suddenly, freely.

"Oh, yeah?"

And he answered with the child in his voice, "And if 'ifs' and 'ands' were pots and pans there'd be no work for tinkers."

Annie leaned against him, one arm flung around his shoulders. Half a hug. Then she reached to pull two dishes out of the cabinet, tiptoed for the water glasses. Smile.

He looked to the frying pan. "These are just about ready."

"Great. You get the pickles. I'll find the napkins and we'll get all this to the table."

"Annie? I felt like talking. Seriously." Will opened the refrigerator. "Is that all right?"

"Fine." *I hope.*

They moved everything to the glass topped table down the hall, in the living room. It took two trips. The room was filled with wicker baskets and plants and framed graphics (originals naturally). There was cream carpeting, a Japanese screen and a dark blue sofa. All today's tasteful. They sat to eat.

The last of the day's sky was against Annie's face. "The sun will be down soon."

"Is the light in your eyes? I'll pull the shades."

"Oh, no. It's fine." She reached to touch his hand. "What did you want to talk about?"

He took a bite of his burger. "I, uh . . . I got a letter from Sandy."

"Oh." And it hung in the air like a tear trapped up on a lash. Glistening.

Ice played at Christmas bells. Both drinking. Will watched Annie's hand gripping the sweated glass. "She says she's overjoyed with Alan. They just bought a house. They have a dog."

"Terrific." Annie's eyes darted in minnow-quick flurry. Glass. Lap. Hands. Will. Plate. Will. "And?"

"She says she'll always love me but it was just too complicated."

"Well, that's reasonable. Falling in love with a homosexual can't be peachy." Annie smiled ruefully. There was a gentle mock in her laugh. "Only you, darling. I'm trying to adjust to the multiple complications of your life." *And I do mean multiple.* "My, but I get tense when you talk about her."

Will nodded. "Mm."

"Your eyes go all liquid and warm. You say 'Sandy' and I feel like I'm watching an image of you on a screen. You're that blind to me." He remained motionless. Hypnotized. "You still love her. I guess she's why you don't love Jeff. She's why you told me you didn't want to be in love with anyone. Sandy hurt you and you don't want to be hurt again."

"Sandy has nothing to do with Jeff and me."

"No?"

"What do you care, Annie? You don't even like him."

"I just think you're using him. To forget her." *Maybe you're using me too. But, in a way, I'm using you.* "It just doesn't seem fair."

"Jeff is really what I wanted to talk about." He took a breath. "I'm breaking up with him."

"Tell him this yet?"

"I . . . I've been trying to let him know. I don't want a scene." Will's hands spread to a vulnerable openness.

Annie stood up from the table. "By all means, avoid a scene. Spare yourself any unpleasantness."

Suddenly a woman's voice (morning mist) rose from the street to fill the room with Latin Mass. Ancient intonation. Annie moved to the window. The voice, soaring Gothic, belonged to the beggar Annie had given the quarter to. She had a bottle in her hand and the sound of her singing gave length to the pause between Annie and Will. Finally, "it's that bag lady." Will made no reply and Annie turned. He seemed on the verge of weeping. Quiet tears poised with blank words in his eyes. Annie whispered, "I wish I could read your mind."

"Annie. You can."

The room becomes a cathedral.

'Salve, mater pietatis

Et totius Trinitatis

Nobile triclinium. . .'

The jarring chords of the telephone broke them both into motion. Annie, in near ritual, closed the window, pulled the shade. Rich plum shades. She moved to the next window and lowered the color there also.

Will had crossed the room and was seated on the sofa with the phone. "Hello? . . . Steve! . . . No." He watched Annie move back to the table. Her eyes locked with his. "No, nothing." Will fell to gazing at the carpet by his feet. "Sure, sure I can meet you . . . OK . . . No, really. I'll be there in ten minutes . . . Great . . . Bye." After replacing the receiver in its cradle he looked up again toward Annie. Her back to him, she was beginning to clear the table. He nearly shuddered. "I'm going out."

"Really."

"Please understand. I can't talk right now. I need some time to clear my head. OK?"

She sighed. Fingered her hair back from her face. "OK. But I think you're running away when you really need to stop and think some things out. If you can't talk to me maybe you should try someone else."

"I need to talk to you."

"Why?" And here she found fear. *God. Don't tell me.*

"You and I . . . Annie. I need . . ." Swamped in helplessness.

She found she could only whisper. "You told Steve ten minutes." Hoarse. "Do what you feel is best. I'm going to stay and do the dishes. I wouldn't want to leave a mess." She set a glass, clinking, onto a

plate. "All right?"

"You don't have to." He rubbed his eyes wearily.

"You go ahead. I'll make sure the door's locked when I leave." Something compelled her to add, "Give Steve my best," and regret was swift. *Oh, Will. Don't. I'm sorry.* She hastily turned away, carrying the dishes to the kitchen. Will left without another word. She barely heard him pull the door closed behind him.

* * *

Annie had just finished stacking the dishes on the draining board when the doorbell rang. *I could ignore it.* Repeat chime. She answered. Standing there with a bottle of Will's favorite cognac was Jeff. Annie tried to smile. *Jesus.* "Hi."

"Well, this is a surprise." He shook her hand. Jeff always shook Annie's hand when he saw her. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

"Actually Will's not even here right now." Oh, my manners. "Come on in."

Jeff looked around suspiciously as he entered the apartment. Annie wondered what he was expecting. "Uh, I was just about to leave. Cleaning up the dishes first."

"Where is William anyway?" Jeff carefully settled himself into the sofa. Looked at Annie expectantly. Settled some more.

"I'm really not sure." *Terrific.* "That is, we kind of had a fight and he left. It wasn't serious." Blushing. She yanked on her shoes. "I've got to go."

"I wish you wouldn't, Annie. I know how close you and William are. I've been worried about him lately. Maybe you could fill me in on a couple of things." Playing his seemingly superior position. "Sit down."

This was your idea. She perched on the edge of the ottoman. "Jeff, there isn't a thing I could tell you. Will and I have been so busy on that project at the office . . . tonight was really the first time in quite a while that we've had any time together away from work." Too fast. "He seems OK to me."

"You said you fought." He pushed through the magazines in a rat-tan stand. Carefully extracted the recent edition of 'Gentlemen's Quarterly', absent-mindedly flipped through the pages. "What about?"

"I don't want to go into it."

"No?"

"Jeff, it's none of your business." Quietly.

"You had a fight with my lover and it's none of my business?" He sounded calm. Didn't even look at her.

"Don't pull that shit with me." *How dare you?* "Ask Will for explanations. I don't owe you any. And I'll be damned if either of you are going to pull me into your problems."

"William and I are having problems?" Near triumph in his tone.

"I'm leaving." She stood. "You can wait, Jeff, but I wouldn't count on him coming home any time soon. He had someone to meet." *And there's my knife, lover.* "Good-bye." She neatly twitched the door to a slam as she left.

* * *

Annie fought her breathing back to normal as she walked. *Damn.* She waved a taxi over the curb, mumbled her address. Sat watching the thick skin on the back of the cabbie's neck as they dodged through traffic. *Damn you! Damn you for doing this to me . . .* All her thoughts were fluttering and flashing like the pale undersides of maple leaves in a storm. A frenetic dance of thought. She paid the man his fare. Blindly entered her building. *What have I done to myself?*

She flipped on the switch for her foyer light as soon as she opened her door. In a crackling shock the bulb blew out. She bolted the door in the dark, moved to the living room. The lights there went on golden and glowing. She sat in the rocker and picked up the nearest book. It was a selection of poems. Wallace Stevens. She reached in to a random page.

It was when I said,
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter.
The fox ran out of his hole.'

* * *

The next morning at the office, Annie managed to stay in conference and away from Will. When he phoned her for lunch she agreed to meet him, reluctance heavy in her voice. Went to the cafeteria with a sheaf of papers under her arm.

Will looked tired. Dry, purple smears under his eyes. His thick, dark curls unusually unruly. "Annie." he grinned. "What a scene last night."

"Oh?"

"I had two drinks with Steve and then went straight home. Alone. Jeff was there." He paused to offer her time for comment. Annie stirred her coffee. "But you knew that."

"Mm-hm." *Let's not game, Will.*

"We had quite a fight." He parted his lips in a weak smile. "He actually broke the blue ginger jar from the mantle." Another pause, then a rush of words, "Guess I won't be seeing him any more. Should have taken your advice, Annie, and talked to him honestly. God, what's the matter with me? Huh?"

"Will, I can't say. I don't know." She picked at her salad. "That Chicago firm phoned me again this morning. They've upped their of-

ferred salary. It's very tempting."

"You said you weren't going to take that job." His mind replayed the crash of breaking porcelain.

"I've been giving it some more thought." *Selfish as I could.* "It might be a smart move. Career-wise."

He decided to risk the question, "Running away?"

"From what?" *My rules now, darling.*

"Me."

"Ah." *You surprise me.* "I could think of it as running to me." Annie smiled. Sipped her coffee. She sighed, "I could."

Then Will laughed. Relief. "Annie."

"Oh, I'm not leaving yet." *I must be nuts.* "There's too much for me to take care of here."

He became solemn. Stared at his plate. "If we tried . . ."

"Will. Please. No ifs." She ran her finger along the lip of her cup. "We'll do what we do and that's all. Ifs are pointless." *We'll just keep them all in our heads, OK?* "Now." She looked at her watch. "It's time to get back to work."

The Trainer of Dogs

At the Moscow Circus
while children squeal
at horse-riding dogs,
the man with water-blue eyes
says he once was a trainer of dogs.
When Hitler's treaded, riveted
plows came out of the West
like an unending storm front,
he was called to the rear lines
to train huskies in the art
of running after tanks.
And with his untrue hands
he'd strap the contact explosive
to that proud Arctic back,
and watch from cover
as the dog scampered, barking,
after the tank-hull
and in the instant of touch
became a fountain of black earth
girded with steel.
And after the last tank
was gone from Russian snow
he never went back
to being a trainer of dogs.
He says it was for the motherland
he turned dogs into bombs,
and he would do it again.
He says he believes in forgiveness.
But a dog comes floppy-eared
to him, and with her wet snout
nuzzles his hand.



Kirk McKoy

Full Pack, Keep Sealed Till Planting

Peas are a cool weather crop.
Plant the moment earth relents.
They bunk deep and settle after a wash.
From a brief forgetting, they rise to
sprawl forth in fatigues, at ease on line,
but spring to drill a full green, packing
themselves upon themselves upon their own,
as if in their short dream they saw before
first drawn to seed, the sign for harvest.



Mokie Pratt (stone engraving, 11¾ x 8¾)

Ye Rosebuds

The winter crept up on its one clammy foot, slid under my door and left its grey slime shining on my walls. And once again left me alone.

The emptiness of this room is buried deep in its joints. Every tile in the floor is aching to hop out of its tight little square, to whisk away with the broom — and there stand the walls, cheering their comrades on. When they're gone, I'll really be no more or less alone than I am at this moment. But still I wish they'd decide to stay.

A woman, I'm told, might help keep the tiles in place. "Get yourself a hot little number and put her to good use," the fellows say. The only hot little numbers I know are simply menopausal.

One loses hope when one is thirty-seven and balding. Not that there ever was much hope; I've been six-foot-five since birth, a height that has always discouraged even those women who thrive on being made to feel like baby-dolls next to their men. And somewhere around seventh grade, I missed out on a session of adolescent secret-sharing which would have enlightened me in the why's and wherefores of making females believe there was more to me than there actually was. I never learned.

I think on my dilemma daily, dividing my attentions between its resolution and the morning crossword. I'm quite adept at crosswords, really I am. At the other, well, lately I've been considering giving it up.

So ran my thoughts that morning as I rode the 7:13 into the city. As a matter of fact, I did give up — both the quest for female companionship and the crossword puzzle. Just slammed my paper down in disgust and giggled grimly down deep inside as I watched the center page float, all black-smudgy, to the orange carpet. Satisfying as it may have been to have wreaked my tiny destruction on the system, I figured I might get arrested for littering if I left it there — the signs say right out "NO LITTERING" — so I bent down for a moment to pick the damned thing up.

That's when I saw the ad.

She was the tallest woman at the meeting of the Greater Washington Tiptop Club, and perhaps in compensation she spent her evening examining the weave of the gnarly Indian carpet in the far corner of the room. Her name, her sticker reported, was Beth, and her neck was bent so that two knobs of vertebrae shone at the edge of her hairline. We shared a sparkly drink; I spilled it, and clumsily, with much heaving of knees and elbows, she cleaned it up. She, too, had come in response to the ad. She told me she was the sister of a Norwegian princess; I told her my address. She smiled when I told her the zip code.

She found my apartment bleak, so I packed up my crossword dictionaries and followed her home.

The tiles in her home were neatly hidden with blue carpeting. Still, she couldn't hide the winter; it was there, only harder to see. I never asked her about it, but I felt that the slick grey trail on her walls was a bother to her. Always acting in order not to react, Beth baked pastries to hide from the snail.

"I learned in Norway to bake pastries, just at the same time as my sister learned to be a princess. Pastry always seemed so much more practical to me. Which would you rather have around in your old age, a princess or a good cook?"

"A good cook, of course," I lied.

In the nighttimes we sat together; she in the kitchen, I on the blue paisley couch. She bought me books full of crosswords, so I felt obliged to include her in my sport.

"What is a type of Russian pastry? One-two-three-four-five letters."

"Um, probably a pirog. Yes, pirog should do. Does that fit?"

As I worked it in, she came out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dusty towel. "You know, the dough for a pirog must be kneaded exactly twelve times, no more, no less, for it to be just perfect."

I nodded, and asked what the word for the set of frills going down the front of a shirt would be.

She didn't know.

In the shower, I rubbed the Lifebuoy between her doughy thighs. She sighed; I cocked my head and hit it on the shower nozzle. She smiled; I did it again, and rubbed the bald spot, wincing. She giggled; I hit it one more time. She began to whimper, thin and weak. I wanted to hold her, but she was out of the stall and putting on a robe.

That night in her dark blue bed, I kneaded her thighs twelve times.

"That was perfect," she said. But I knew she was lying.

"Look, Beth, the moon. It looks like a machete, slicing the sky into bitesize bits."

"It looks like a banana to me."

The ladies in the office said to me, "Oh, you're putting on some weight around the middle! Who've you got cooking for you these days?"

I told them I had taken a class at the Culinary Arts Institute, and I had been doing a lot of homework. And I chuckled.

They shook their blue-haired heads in unison and clucked, "You'll never find a nice woman at that rate."

I thought to myself that they were right.

"You know," she said to me, "when I'm with you, I feel just like a little baby-doll."

I went in the morning to pick up the *Post* and found that the piles of grey exhaust-stained slush that I thought would never leave were suddenly gone. I wondered if the corresponding grey stains were erased from my walls at home.

She didn't cry when I told her. She just handed me my dictionaries and a bundle of crullers wrapped in a dusty towel, and told me she'd see me next winter.



Sally Kish (9 x 9 pen and ink)



Granite Maiden
Dave Hubbard

Stray

The dog stood against the bed
unable to move forward in the direction
of the tugging leash,
unable to go back.

With her muzzle in the blankets and sheets
she bore the assault the best she could, shivering,
but unable to alter whatever fears she had
and come forward.

She knew nothing; her own name
fell dully on her
like a limp section of the morning paper.
She raised a paw and exposed
the soft pulp of her breast
and the sag of a belly no longer full of pups.
I pulled again.

The vinyl collar, tight at her throat,
choked her into whining, then
it slipped over the ears and let go,
and I fell back.

The rain drips down the eaves, and
I think of her pups somewhere under a strip of cloth.
I think of the mouths
nudging each other in darkness for something to suck.
I reach for you
opening my robe and lying back.



Before the Shutter
Tom Grosman



Mokie Pratt (9 x 12 collograph)

Bearing Children

The women sit upright in chairs,
At night small stars and stones
beat down the silent tunnels
of their eyes.

Many nights I have lain in sweat
among the women. Let it begin now:
they push hands through me
I feel bone clench stiff as stakes
drive my ruined face up
into the hammer-hard sky.
But they will not stop
not until I am born. It will end
in the shadows with my color bled
out of veins crushed to bruises
and dust on my tongue. Ghosts
of dead lace bow to the wind
as it lumbers under the glass.

Listen to the women die
(red bitch-hound, harpy, womb)
I lie on these foul sheets
this artery of coal, earth's pulse —
my mouth opens to receive their bitter hands
they wrench out the pearl of my tongue.



Steven Zerby

United States Virgin Islands, February, 1980

Frederiksted, St. Croix, looks
like the mauve velour muzzle of a young animal,
moans through its teeth into its ocean,
Its silk taffeta, green sea.

And it is a dark town;
Aged ashes of its fireburned greathouses
Are acrid in its air,
And its firecharred sugar mills emit
Smoke ghosts.

At night in Fredericksted
The quadrille dancers
Sashay,
Umber eyes widely opened
Mouths all glitter-toothed,
Promenades, promenades les toutes.

WHEREAS:

Christiansted, St. Croix appears
A silver-painted chandelier
when the sea-sassed sun
Returns its magnified rays
Through the undulating rotations
of its zillion, ass-round, glisten-dimpled
broken wavelet rumps.

And in the evening
The changeling, chromium sea of Christiansted
Turns pewter,
Takes on the ochre of the sunset
And shoves it, yellow onto
The shores of the town.

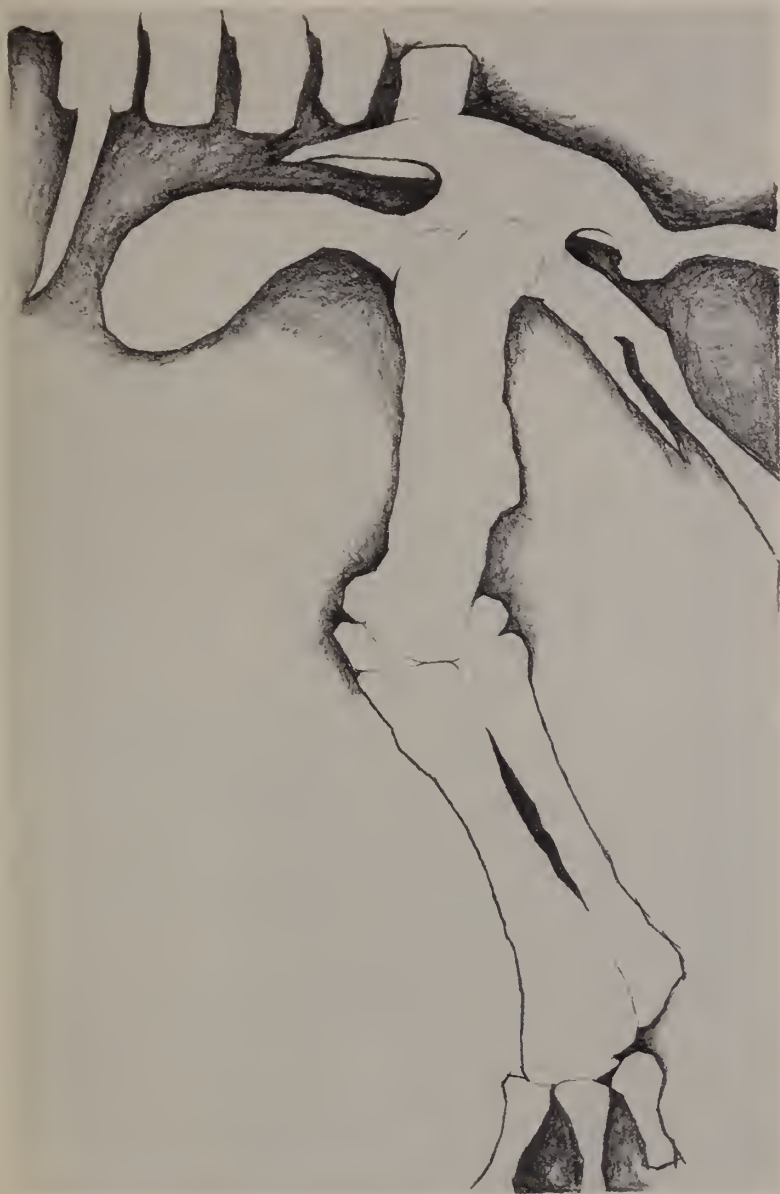
The town, a tilting
Tourist town,
Games-players' town.
Playing Blind Man's Buff,
Their nightlite eyes unsee
Each night
a Shade,
Wide at its base,
Curved to whip the wind,
And pointed as an arrow,
Covers the ocean from horizon to its shore
The way a man's hand might cover
His gap-toothed, laughing mouth.

Once When T Was Home

Once when T was home
from the mental hospitals
we compared visions.
He dreamed of a giant knife
to slice the rot and scabs
out of his mind. And I wanted
to place my skull
upon the railroad tracks
and release the pus.

Exhaust, the sounds of traffic.
When the squad car cruised past
we jumped up from the curb and ran.
They didn't follow. I bought three pints
Of Mother Goldstein and we sat on the steps
of the ninth street bank drinking wine
from brown paper bags. Later, in an alley
we peed on the side of a chartered bus
and laughed as the steam rose
from the cold.

We were the only ones in the world.



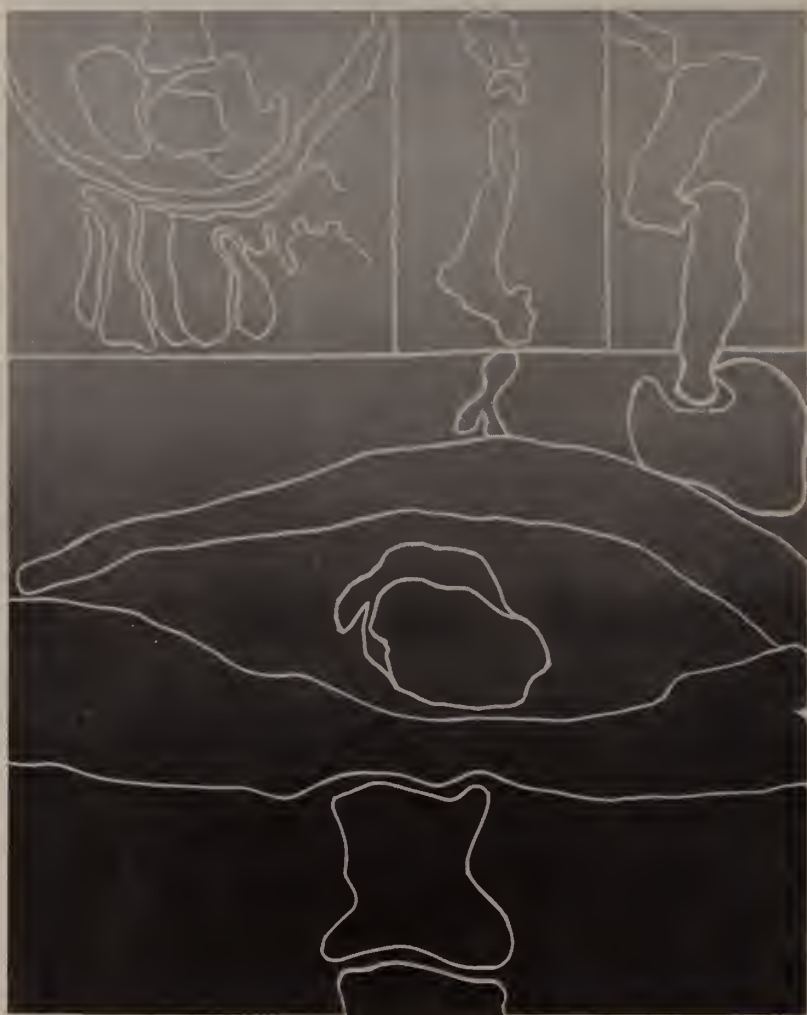
April Barber (11 x 17¼)

A Winter Landscape

Long fingers of the wind
lift shingles from their shadows.
One roof extends into another and another
until the surface of the sky
burns blue at the ends of an alley.
And I wake up—the nightmare,
still poised like a splinter in my eye,
unnoticed by another.
It's a normal morning,
the pigeons taking up the sunlight
on their backs like a day's work.
Outside the strangers arrive in small groups.
They squat and stand on street corners
their shadows joining hands.
The listless expression of their faces
surfaces and shifts in the wind
like the reflection of dust
on the sides of an old bottle
or like the litter that blows about their ankles,
old and torn as a family photo of my face
when I was still young and unforgiven.
And I remember then, that the dead skins of my cats
were once strung up for a joke
outside my bedroom window.
How the snow caught in their mouths,
hung open against the sky like Christmas stockings.



Sanjusangendo
Matt Arozian (8½ x 16½ airbrush)



Organics

Belle Burkhardt (11 x 13½ color print)

Your Mistress' Eyes

Your mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.
They watch you from the powerless moon
Effaced by flecks of fast-food neon
Leading up to the luxury highrise
Where you spend repentent evenings with your wife.
You take a few friends, over for dinner,
Out to the concrete balcony
And make a drunken game: let's throw
Potatoes at that pool down there, off-season, drained.
(In summer, some Juliet will swim,
Skin brown and firm as a spud,
Beneath your gaze. You'll sigh, and come inside,
And push the AC up another notch.)
No weather reaches you up there. Neon negates
The tidal pull of your mistress' sighs.
The rent includes protection from the seasons.
The disposal transmutes the garbage.
The dishwasher blesses the goblets
Rinsed of last night's wine.
You stand on a fine rug through sliding glass doors:
Visible, but sealed beyond touching.

The Nature, Selection, and Care of Omelette Eggs

Omelette-making has aroused the wandering imagination of America. It is the topic of scintillating conversations on the beaches and in the streets, at quiet brunches and bubbling soirees, in brightly lit ballrooms and dimly lit barrooms, wherever 'with-it' people are, you hear the subject discussed, and yet how woefully ignorant so many are of even a rudimentary knowledge of the nature, selection, and care of the principal ingredient: the humble egg. There is no use in trying to make an omelette without eggs, or even with them, unless you understand them. Before finding out how eggs are dealt with, you must learn about their components.

All eggs are divided into three parts: shell, albumen, and yolk. Shells are hard, because they contain calcium as bones do, and are worn by the albumen and yolk to protect them from molestation, much as the oyster wears his shell. More spherical than cube-shaped, shells come in sizes ranging from microscopic, like bug eggshells, which are so small that you may live to be ninety-two and yet never see one, to the size of a basset hound. If you were to paint a cassowary eggshell orange, and tell your friends it was a pumpkin, they might believe you and try to carve it. Shells may have any complexion, depending upon the sort of creature producing them. Besides solid colors, shells come in stripes or speckles, or may even be piebald, like those of the chatterfield marsh wren. Often blue and covered with swirls of vanilla filigree, the shells of rabbit eggs have windows in the bottom through which little bunnies may be viewed. Whole menageries of animals like to break out of shells. During the Mesozoic Era, you could watch a diplodocus, or even a toothy plesiosaurus, poke through a shell and blinkingly enter the world, while during the Dark Ages, dragons, gryphons, and cockatrices (which came from rooster eggs hatched in dung heaps) were more common. Today,

alligators, turtles, frogs, flamingoes, and ducks (both platypus and mallard), all emerge from shells for reasons of their own.

Always cordially sharing the room inside a shell are the yolk and the albumen. Yolks are yellow, like the sun — fried eggs are often served 'sunny-side up' — and God allots only one per egg. Egg yolks make wholesome cakes, work wonders with your hair, and sometimes sit at the bottom of a glass of beer. Given the chance, yolks turn into little animals. Rich in vitamins, yolks are by far the tastiest part of an egg, followed closely by the albumen, leaving the shell a distant third.

Known as the 'egg-white,' even though uniformly clear, the albumen's job is to surround the yolk, and nurse it if, by chance, it turns into a little animal. Albumen fluffs angel food cakes when beaten, becomes meringue when whipped, and stirred in coffee, separates out the grinds. Albumen coagulates when cooked, but that is no cause to wrinkle up your nose, because albumen is made up purely of a protein called albumin, which is found in your bloodstream, though good doctors never give eggs intravenously. Sometimes a recipe calls only for the albumen, and you have to leave the poor yolk behind, but you can make it into mayonnaise, so that it does not feel unloved.

Of eggs man eats, only those of the chicken belong in omelettes. Eggs of sturgeon, geese, ducks, gulls, and turtles each have culinary merits, but protocol restricts their use in omelettes to dire crises where the natural egg supply has been interrupted, as in famines, sieges, blockades, and independent-trucker strikes. Raccoons steal their omelette eggs before dawn from the chicken coops of unwary farmers, usually by tip-toeing through an unlatched wire gate; but you must purchase yours during the regular shopping hours of the local supermarket, gaining entry via the automatically sliding doors. When first faced with a supermarket dairy section, prospective buyers are bewildered by the multitude of egg sizes. Depending upon the height and girth of the eggs within, egg cartons carry labels reading 'small,' 'medium,' 'large,' and 'extra-large,' but since size is unrelated to quality, you may select whichever carton pleases you. Many prefer the blue cartons. If your recipe demands four large eggs, and you have only a carton of small ones, do not become discouraged — crying never solves anything — just substitute six of the small ones for four of the large and continue with the recipe as if nothing had happened; no one will be the wiser.

Besides the various sizes of chicken eggs, the two prevailing colors, white and brown, baffle novice omeletteers. Whether or not you use one or the other depends on your life-style; white eggs belong in urbane kitchens, while brown eggs are more suited to the rustic life of a white-washed country cottage with a vegetable garden out back. A popular misconception holds that brown eggs are more natural than white eggs, and are therefore much healthier for you. That is nonsense. Nothing about white eggs is either unnatural or unhealthy;

the species of chicken laying the eggs governs whiteness or brownness. Further, an experiment conducted at the University of Maryland, in which crated laboratory cats were fed only white or brown eggs over a two-month period, revealed that neither had any extra nutritional benefits. Only a crate of control cats, which were not fed anything, showed signs of ill health.

Before buying a carton of eggs, open it and gently turn each egg with your fingertips, looking for telltale shell cracks and the resulting albumen leakage, which indicate mishandling. Broken eggs are inclined not only to spoil, but also to fall apart when removed from their carton. If you have weak eyesight, you ought not be embarrassed to use a magnifying glass, for while conducting such inspections with that sort of apparatus once garnered laughter from fellow shoppers, in our age of consumerism it draws praise.

Federal law requires that chickens lay only fresh eggs, so there is a good chance that those you buy will be fresh. There are two ways of testing for freshness. One way is to open the egg carefully, then stand back. Now, slowly creep forward and sniff at it. If fresh, the egg will not smell; if rotten, it will smell like a rotten egg, and so will you and everything within yards, but only for two or three days. The safer way to see if an egg is fresh is to drop it in deep, cold water, as in a well. If your egg is fresh, it has sunk out of sight. A rotten egg, like a canny politician, stays on top. Pluck your rotten eggs from the well and take them to the manager of the store from which you bought them. He should cheerfully refund your money. If he does not, you may smash them on the floor, over by the meat counter.

Storing eggs is necessary when they are not in use. Always keep eggs in both their carton and a cool place, like a refrigerator. Use them within two weeks, because otherwise they rot or hatch, and neither rotten eggs nor chicks go well in omelettes. Dip an egg in wax, as seacooks do, and it keeps for two months. Bacon grease may also be used, but greasy eggs slip out of your hand as easily as a wet bar of soap, and plummet to the floor. Use broken eggs at once; a moment's hesitation causes them to spoil.

Since only the albumen and yolk are used in omelettes, you must separate them from the shell. Over the ages, man developed many ways of achieving this. Recent interpretations of the prehistoric wall paintings found in the Lascaux caverns of France, and archeological reconstructions of fossilized shell fragments, indicate that early man solved this problem by biting the end of the egg, sucking out the insides, then spitting them into a stone omelette pan. Greek science refined this method with the introduction of 'egg-blowing.' Aeschylus, the tragedian, describes the process:

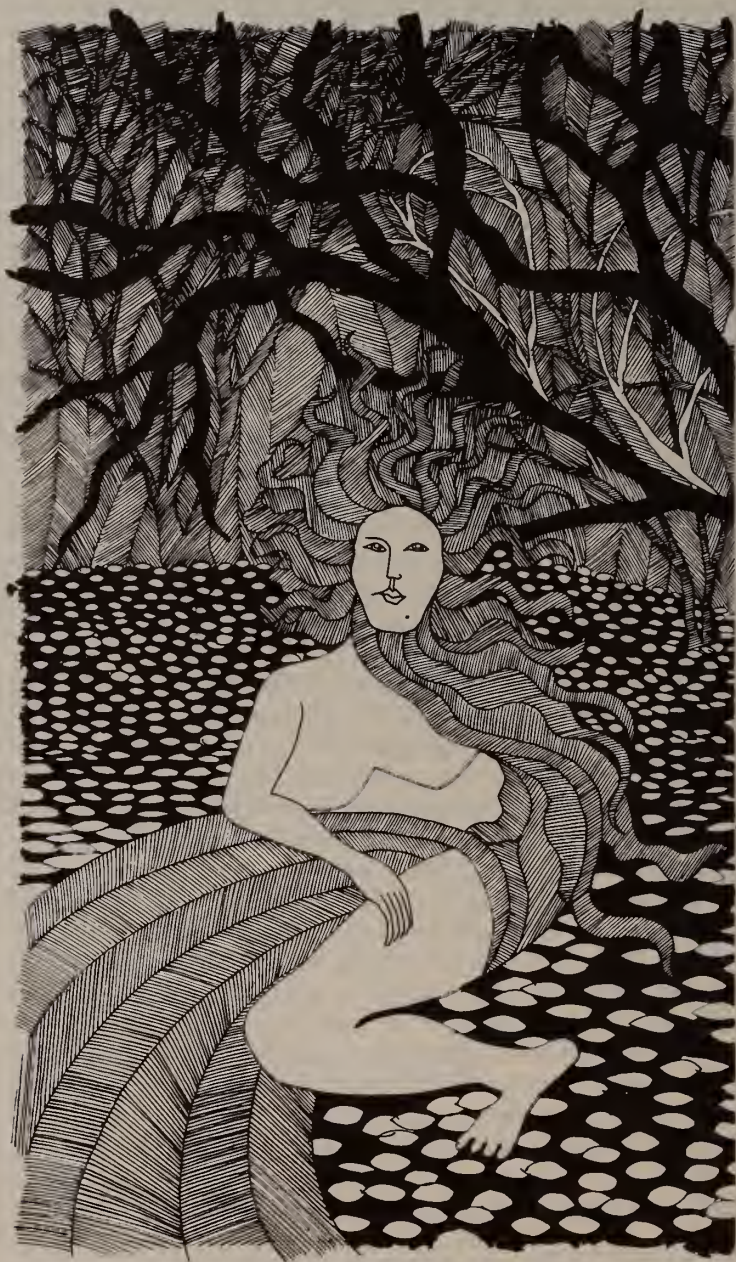
*Hold the Egg? Nay, cradle it, lest Zeus,
In His imperious wrath,
Strike ye down.
With an iron needle,*

Hewn from unfeeling rock,
Pierce both ends as unmercifully as a god,
Press thy lips to one end and blow,
Blow out the juices till the last drop has gone,
And reflect on this:
The Fates have the same designs on thee.

Two dissimilar methods were used by the Romans. On weekdays, they practised *dissiliovum*, placing the egg on the ground and cleaving with the single, overhand stroke of a sword, while on Saturdays, Sundays and arbor days, they practised *cuspidovum*, placing it on a board and hammering nails through it. As neither of these methods were particularly immaculate, Roman omelettes had a high grit-to-filler ratio. In the Dark Ages, omelette-making was in the grips of the barbaric Grand Teutons, fierce knights who laughed and crushed eggs in their gauntleted fists, often getting yolk on their secular arms and armor. When the Enlightenment replaced the Dark Ages, on or about the 29th of May, 1453, Copernicus, the plucky Pole, discovered the enlightened method of 'cracking-eggs,' which totally routed the beknighted Teutons. Copernicus clutched the egg in his right hand, rapped it on the edge of the omelette pan hard enough to break the shell, but gently enough to keep the insides from flying all over, then grasped both ends of the shell and bent them at right angles to each other, allowing the albumen and yolk to slip quietly into a waiting gallipot.

Progress, marching indefatigably forward, like a lemming, sweeps us all towards the shore of a brave, new world where all people live in harmony and omelettes, regardless of race, creed, or filler, are made among the stars. Along this path, omeletteer pilgrims have found a new method of opening eggs befitting our Atomic Age. This method is called 'knife-tapping,' a synthesis of the old Roman *dissiliovum* and the Copernican 'cracking-eggs.' To knife-tap an egg, run a steak knife through an electric sharpener until your thumb, when pulled lightly across the blade, bleeds robustly. Bandage the wound. Holding the egg in the fingertips of your left hand, and clutching the knife in your right, tap the egg across its middle so as to form a deep crevice in the shell. Now, hinge the egg open and let the yolk and albumen slide out into your mixing bowl. Novice omeletteers often have trouble gauging the amount of force needed to make the crevice, sometimes slicing through not only their eggs, but also their left hands. Those who do this too often should practice with a dull butter knife until they master the stroke.

With the edifying knowledge and skill now gained, you are ready to take your place at social gatherings. Dazzle your friends. Drink Perrier-with-a-twist from somebody's slipper. Share your most intimate recipes at tender assignations. Come and go like a moth among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars, a murmuring oracle. You may even make an omelette.



Her Endlessness

detail from Brian James O'Tousa (17 x 15 pen and ink)

The Leaf's Task

A golden leaf drifted
To the floor of my belly;
Its million atoms of gold dust
Harnessed by singular efforts,
Smelted down by suffering,
And forged on the anvil of dream,
Settle here in solitude.

What forgotten tree
Unfastened you to find me
And bring me back to the family?
Everywhere my limbs turn,
Whatever stream my thoughts float down,
Your whetted serrations remind me
That I wander without that root.

You do not move,
Yet you move me.

Easter

It isn't just sunburned looks anymore.
It's the way you breathe, the way you smoke
and flash hot white teeth.
You always take away from me
a taste of embers, leaving me
a nest in flames.

Morning. The bell clacks seven times.
I open to the elegant curve of your hand.
You try to speak justice. I notice your eye is gashed
and so is your cheek. I ask why to see you smile meekly.

A sparrow leaves a thistle at my feet. It must
mean love and hyacinths startling the air.
You come to me with a fist of stolen lilacs.
But when I ask if they're for me
you walk away. Owls are winging from their daily tombs,
a sparrow's cry pierces the lurid air.
Your shadow barely touches me.

Your naked limbs tangled
in white sheets, I kneel and watch you
rise, riding the upsweeping waterfall of your death shroud.
Your smoothly muscled arms are outstretched, awash with light.
The curves of your neck, your lips, your thigh
electrify me.

A Slug's Remembrance

The gift of time
With her I wore,
Yet now the slim
And breaking path
We cut crosswise
Is turning back
And thins itself

To nil. Is trace
A followed smell
That comes to life
As bodies pass
Like wizened lips
That merge and part
Along a sill

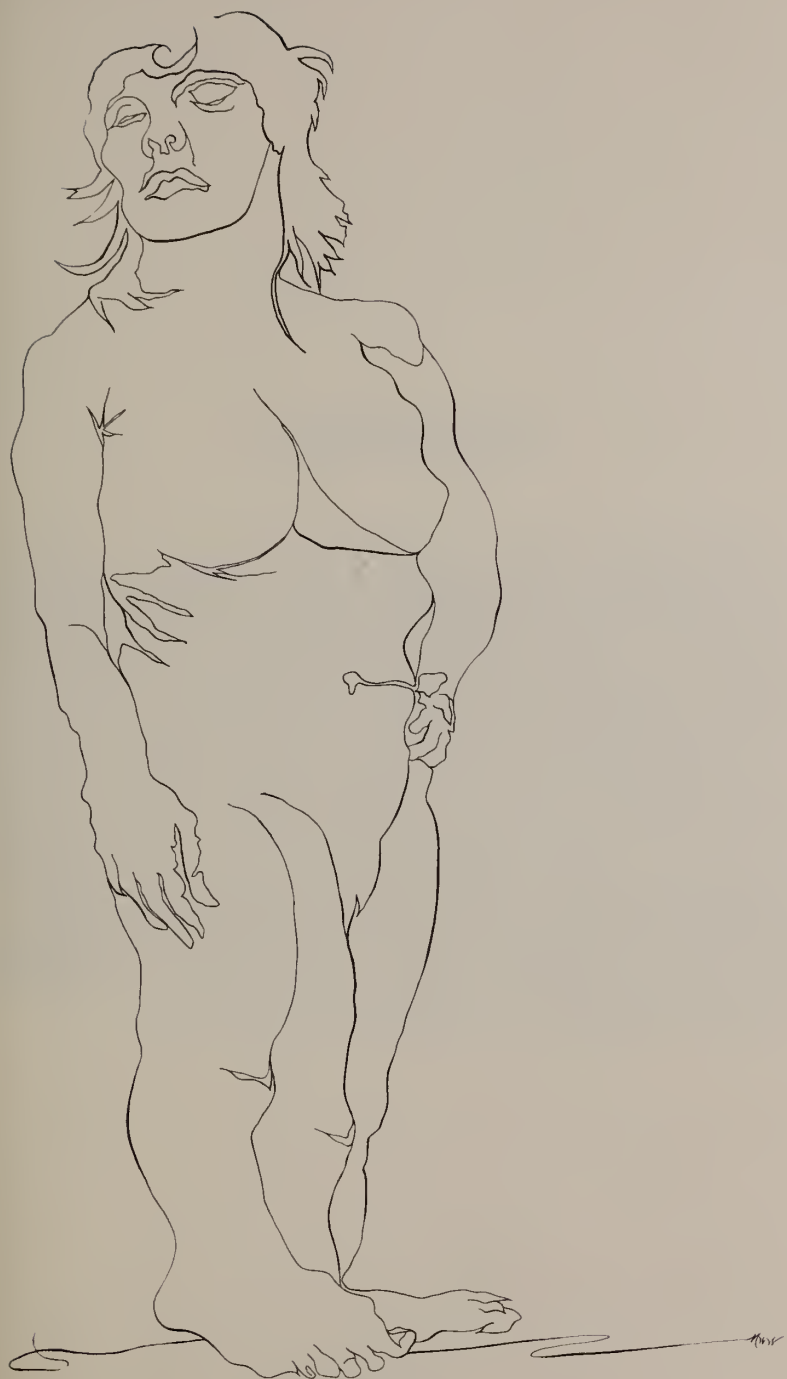
Then stop? Or can
The tasted line
Return upon
The crawling tongue
That tears and salt
And sun have torn
And daily dropped

In slime? If I
Could find the place
Effluvia
Hath fallen, ripe
That silken touch
Would make the earth
I'd timely turn.

Trying to Come Apart

You're all skin the rough heat of sumac,
thickened with bruises. Body, you pant
rank steam while onions eat our breath.
You're itch, you're a grind of sockets,
you're meat that jerks and sags in turn.
Why do I think of sour cabbage clubbed
purple and drying in halls? Don't answer:
if I let you talk for yourself
you'll chug and wheeze like oldtime Sunday
in a wooden church, all maroon and black,
far from the yellow mercy of blowing wheat.
You want me under your skin, I want

to fly light and never remember pull or wing.
Just go away. Go knock me a possible
door through your cells. I'll float off
some softer way. Out farther fields
I want to watch the brassy fat bells
stretch thin into harpstrings, hair,
auras, till they pale into strands of
wind over snowfields, whispers of cold.
Old heft and drag, old love, I'm
clearing off. Take heart. Look: I've crossed
our arms like this over our chest so we
can separate with the dignity of a sign.



Delineations

Matt Westbrook (15 x 22 pen and ink)

Contributors

• Cynthia Matsakis Anderson is a junior Lit major • Matt Arozian is a graphic artist • April Barber is a senior studying costume design • Kathy Bearden was fiction editor of *Calvert* last year • Belle Burkhardt is a student at UMCP • Paul Davis is a senior at UMCP • Michael Fitzgerald studies Political Science at UMCP • Bill Gorski formerly edited poetry for *Calvert* • Tom Grosman is an undergraduate at UMCP • Ernest Green is a special undergraduate student at UMCP • Roberta Gunod has her first published creative work in this issue • Dave Hall was editor of *Calvert* last year • Charles Hornstein is a 1969 graduate of UMCP • Dave Hubbard is a senior Art major • Rod Jellema directs the poetry workshops at UMCP • Sally Kish is a senior Advertising Design major at UMCP • Jennifer LaRue is the fiction editor of *Calvert* • Eric Lerner is a film major at UMCP • Kirk McKoy is photo editor for the *Diamondback* • Sibbie O'Sullivan teaches creative writing • Brian O'Tousa is studying Art History at UMCP • Eileen O'Tousa is *Calvert's* art editor • Mokie Pratt studies art at the Corcoran • Ruthellen Quillen teaches fiction writing at UMCP • Jewell Rhodes will publish a book in the near future • Kathy Riley is a grad student at UMCP • Shirley Scott is publishing a collection of poetry this fall • Laura Slavin is a grad student in English • Kathleen Sysma is a senior English major • Reed Whittemore is an English Professor at UMCP • Matt Westbrook is poetry editor for *Calvert* • Steven Zerby is a staff photographer for the *Diamondback*.



